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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 11th MEETING

Chairman:	Mr. FUENTES-IBAÑEZ (Vice-Chairman)	(Bolivia)
later:	Mr. KHOUINI (Chairman)	(Tunisia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 73: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued) (A/47/13, 413, 438, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493 and 601)

1. In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Fuentes-Ibañez (Bolivia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

2. Mr. ARTZIELI (Israel) said that his delegation would refrain from commenting in detail on the report of the Commissioner-General (A/47/13), although it had much to say in response to its statements and general tenor. Neither would it reply to the distortions and defamatory accusations heard in some of the speeches during the debate. Its decision took into account the current peace process and reflected the wish to reduce polemics, charges and countercharges, and to set a tone conducive to the spirit of the peace negotiations.

3. His delegation would like to mention some of the steps taken by Israel during the reporting period to improve the living conditions of the Palestinian Arabs, including Arab refugees, and on the measures adopted recently by the new Government of Israel. They included restructuring of tax law and labour reform intended to provide full social and health benefits to Arab employees in the territories, like those granted to all union employees in Israel. Furthermore, steps had been taken to rehabilitate refugees and to review individual cases of resettlement of displaced persons. As a result, the number of persons who had returned to the administered territories had reached 79,368, not including persons who had returned to the territories in 1967 and 1968.

4. All college and university campuses throughout the territories had been reopened. Incentives had been offered for export, local production and investment as well as the establishment of new factories in the West Bank and Gaza district. At the same time, measures had been implemented to improve the atmosphere among the Arab residents, such as the suspension of deportation orders.

5. As in previous years, Israel had extended its cooperation and assistance to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), subject to arrangements required by considerations of military security. Despite the difficult situation of recent years, including the difficulties emanating from unilateral attempts by UNRWA to broaden its activities beyond the limits of its original mandate, the Government of Israel had made considerable efforts to reduce friction.

6. Table 13 of the report of the Commissioner-General (A/47/13) listing contributions in cash and in kind by Governments, showed that, during the reporting period, Israel had contributed the sum of US$ 112,141. His delegation wished to point out that, in fact, Israel as host country had made

(Mr. Artzieli, Israel)

contributions in kind amounting to an additional estimated $25.8 million, distributed among education, relief and social services, health, housing and miscellaneous expenses.

7. Since the Madrid Conference in October 1991, Israel and its Arab neighbours had been engaged in a peace process which included bilateral and multilateral negotiations. The new Government of Israel intended to take vigorous steps to put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The multilateral negotiations were dealing with a number of issues of common interest, including the refugee problem. Recently, the United Nations had been invited to participate in the multilateral talks, including the working group on refugees.

8. It would be in the framework of the multilateral talks and not at the United Nations that the problems of refugees would be discussed, negotiated, and, hopefully, solved. Israel trusted that the Special Political Committee would abandon the positions taken in the past in order to move towards the future. The resolutions adopted on that item in previous years, for the most part unacceptable to his delegation, did not aid the plight of refugees. In fact, one-sided resolutions did not contribute to the peace process - they hindered it. Given the emerging regional trends in the direction of peace, it was logical to hope that the changes in the Middle East would lead to a new approach regarding outdated United Nations resolutions as well, for the purpose of creating a climate of mutual tolerance, trust and respect.

9. Mr. BISHER (United Arab Emirates) said that his delegation was certain that UNRWA programmes were vital and essential until peace was achieved in the Middle East and the situation of refugees had been resolved in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Israel was responsible for the situation of refugees, specifically the implementation of paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) relative to the return of refugees. However, Israel had continued to impede the attainment of those objectives.

10. As could be seen from the report, the sufferings of the refugee population were worsening. Despite the optimism generated by the multilateral talks in Madrid, tension was increasing and living conditions were deplorable for many inhabitants of the occupied territories. In particular, the civilian population suffered from the measures imposed by Israel, such as expropriation of land, uprooting of trees and sealing of houses. Moreover, Israel violated international law by detaining 12,700 residents of the occupied territories, 7,500 of whom were held in military detention centres.

11. Since the beginning of the intifadah, Israel had deported hundreds of people, including UNRWA officials. Soldiers used weapons of war against children armed only with stones. Despite it all, the Palestinian people, in their years of struggle against Israeli occupation, had shown their desire to resolve the refugee problem in accordance with the norms of international law.

(Mr. Bisher, United Arab Emirates)

12. The United Arab Emirates reaffirmed its support to the Palestinian people for the realization of their inalienable right to self-determination, and urged the international community to continue offering its support as well.

13. Mr. ZHANG Yan (China) said that, during the period covered by the report (A/47/13) the question of Palestine still had remained unresolved. At its forty-sixth session, the General Assembly had adopted 11 resolutions concerning that item, most of which had not been implemented.

14. The United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine had submitted 46 reports up to the present, but no progress had been made in the implementation of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III). Furthermore, UNRWA had encountered difficulties in carrying out its work; its staff members were frequently detained and their lives threatened. He hoped, nevertheless, that the Israeli authorities would faithfully implement the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, would respect the fourth Geneva Convention and meet their obligations under the United Nations Charter to allow UNRWA to carry out its work unimpeded.

15. In the period 1991-1992, UNRWA had worked under very difficult and even dangerous conditions. His delegation expressed its thanks and admiration to UNRWA staff for their achievements and dedication.

16. The question of Palestine was a regional conflict over which the United Nations had held lengthy deliberations. The key to the question of Palestine refugees lay in a just and reasonable solution to the Palestinian question at an early date. Since the start of the Peace Conference on the Middle East, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 46/75, a new turning-point in that process. He sincerely hoped that those multilateral meetings would yield positive results.

17. China supported the Peace Conference on the Middle East and had participated in the third phase of meetings as well as in the meetings of the multilateral working groups, including the group on the question of refugees. The Chinese Government had always advocated a political solution to the Middle East situation on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, especially Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the return of the Arab territories and the re-establishment of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people ensuring respect for their sovereignty, and the security of all countries of the Middle East, including Israel.

18. China enjoyed good relations with the Arab States and had also established diplomatic relations with Israel. It was ready to make a contribution to the achievement of a lasting peace in the Middle East at an early date.

19. Mr. LORFI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation had carefully reviewed the report of the Commissioner-General (A/47/13) which described the painful conditions under which the Palestinian people had been living in the occupied territories for more than four decades. He referred in particular to paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 of that report and to table 12 which indicated the number of casualties in the occupied territories between 1 July 1991 and 30 June 1992.

20. The vital role that education could play in improving the cultural, scientific and social levels of the people of the occupied territories was undisputable, and that was why his delegation was highly concerned about the future of Palestinian students who were, according to paragraph 17 of the report currently facing grave educational obstacles.

21. The economic problems of the occupied territories was another matter of grave concern. In that connection, the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/47/294 presented further evidence of the inhumane practices of the occupying authorities towards the legitimate owners of those territories.

22. UNRWA was trying to improve the living conditions of the deprived people of Palestine but in order to achieve that goal, it needed the continuing help of the international community. The Islamic Republic of Iran continued to make its annual contribution to UNRWA. In addition, the International Islamic University of Iran would begin to grant scholarships to Palestinian students with a view to enhancing their scientific knowledge in various fields.

23. Finally, he reiterated his delegation's condemnation of the inhumane policies of the occupying power and stressed the need for the continuation of the Agency's work and the extension of its mandate.

24. Mr. Khouini (Tunisia) took the Chair.

25. Mr. ALAMUDDIN (Lebanon) said that his country had always stood ready to cooperate with respect to the question of Palestine refugees and deplored the fact that after 43 years, the question of Palestine refugees had still not been resolved. The problem was the result of the repressive practices of Israel, its contempt for resolutions and treaties, its acts of aggression against Palestinian camps and its occupation of Palestinian territories.

26. Moreover, Israel had not implemented Security Council resolution 425 (1978) which constituted a violation of the fourth Geneva Convention. In order to find a constructive solution to the problem, it was essential that the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their natural aspirations to self-determination be respected. The international community should apply pressure on Israel to compensate the refugees, allow displaced people to return and give them back their lands.

(Mr. Alamuddin, Lebanon)

27. His country gave asylum to Palestine refugees and, despite its limited resources, had also contributed facilities and services. The people and economy of Lebanon had paid a high price for that contribution particularly in the southern part of the country. Lebanon urged all States to contribute to UNRWA, which played a key role in seeking a solution to the problem of Palestine refugees and recommended the re-establishment of the Agency's headquarters in Beirut when security conditions so permitted.

28. Finally, he stressed the importance of enabling the Palestinian students to finish their studies in the occupied territories.

29. Mr. LI Song Jin (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that since its establishment in 1949, UNRWA had been carrying out a wide range of activities in the fields of education, health, relief and social services for the benefit of Palestinian refugees. However, despite the Agency's enormous endeavours, there had been no fundamental changes in the situation of the Palestinian refugees as the report of the Commissioner-General (A/47/13) showed.

30. If peace was to be achieved in the Middle East, Israel would have to renounce its claims to the occupied Arab territories and withdraw its troops from them and the issues of political independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and the rights of all States in the region to exist would have to be adequately settled. Israel should also comply fully with the provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention and respect the rights of UNRWA staff.

31. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea supported the holding of international peace talks on the Middle East with the participation of the representative of Palestine and, in particular, the efforts of the Palestinian and other Arab peoples towards a fair solution of the Middle East question.

32. Mr. MANSOUR (Observer for Palestine) said that the statement of the representative of Israel contained inaccurate data on, for instance, the number of displaced Palestinians who had been allowed to come back to the occupied Palestinian territories. There was a glaring difference between Israel's figure of 79,368 and the figure of 12,000 in the reports of the Secretary-General and of the High Commissioner. On the other hand, the representative of Israel had not commented on many paragraphs of the Commissioner-General's report because he could not refute the facts in them.

33. Israel recognized that the United Nations had been invited to participate in the working group on refugees but the representative of Israel had said that the question of refugees should not be considered at the United Nations but rather within the framework of multilateral talks. If the representative of Israel accepted the participation of the United Nations, he should also accept that such participation had to be based on United Nations resolutions.

(Mr. Mansour, Observer, Palestine)

34. If the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council were implemented, the work of the Special Political Committee, the General Assembly and the Security Council would end. However, if a country did not respect its obligations under the Charter, it was incumbent upon the United Nations and the Special Political Committee to continue their discussions on the topic until such Member complied with those obligations and implemented the relevant resolutions.

35. Contrary to what the representative of Israel had said, his delegation did not consider the General Assembly resolutions relating to the difficult situation of Palestine refugees unilateral. The most important of those resolutions was General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, in particular its paragraph 11. That resolution could not be described as unilateral. For many years, and most recently at the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, the United States had submitted draft resolutions on the question of Palestine refugees and no country had voted against such resolutions, not even Israel.

36. In 1949, when Israel had been admitted as a State Member of the United Nations, the representative of Israel had made a statement in which his country undertook to implement General Assembly resolutions 181 (II) and 194 (III); therefore, Israel could not now say that such resolutions were unilateral. What was happening was that Israel refused to implement those resolutions, and if Israel continued to refuse to implement the resolutions, including Security Council resolution 237 (1967), the United Nations would continue to consider that question for as long necessary.

37. The CHAIRMAN announced that, at its 12th meeting, to be held on Thursday, 5 November 1992, at 10 a.m., the Committee would continue and conclude the general debate on agenda item 73. At its 13th meeting to be held on Friday, 6 November, at 10 a.m., the Committee would begin the consideration of agenda item 33 entitled "Policies of apartheid of the Government of South Africa".

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.